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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA IN ADVANCE OF FEBRUARY 18 GAERC

Classified By: Charge Maryruth Coleman, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In their February 13 meeting, European Union Division Director/Deputy Political Director Matej Marn told A/DCM that the February 18 GAERC would focus on Kosovo, which would be the first item on the external relations agenda. He hoped that the debate on other topics would be short. He expected the GAERC to issue conclusions on Chad, Kenya, and Burma. End Summary.

Western Balkans

¶2. (C/NF) Marn explained that the Slovenian Presidency is working with other Quint members to prepare the groundwork for the EU reaching an agreement on Kosovo at the GAERC meeting. The regional directors of the Quint have been visiting capitals of countries that have problems with a EU common position on recognizing Kosovo in order to discover their real bottom lines. Marn noted that we should not use "platform" anymore because the Spanish have such an aversion to it; he added that "Spain is a really tough case." The regional directors of the Quint and Slovenia have drafted a consolidated version of the platform. In the next couple of days, Slovenia will try to coordinate bilaterally with all member-states in Brussels. Slovenia will give other member states the opportunity to read the consolidated version and become familiar with it, but they will not pass along the text in an effort to prevent any leaks. The political directors will meet the afternoon of February 17 to try to consolidate a text. The FMs will then discuss it on February 18 until they reach agreement. The Western Balkans will be the first item on the agenda after the two general affairs items.

Middle East Peace Process

¶3. (C) Marn said that Slovenia hoped to keep the debate quite short. He commented that while everyday there were new events, in a political sense there had not been any major improvements since the January GAERC meeting. He predicted that Ministers who had been in the region would discuss their visits. Marn noted that at the February 11-12 EU-Arab League Ministerial Meeting in Malta, the EU had called upon Arab states to support the MEPP. In addition, the EU had stressed

the importance of translating the contributions promised in Paris into concrete projects on the ground.

Iran

¶4. (C) Marn stated that Solana probably would brief on the nuclear dossier, but noted that he had not met with Jalili since the January GAERC. The French, UK and German FMs might brief the Council. He confirmed that the GAERC would not discuss the new candidates for designation, but the PSC would. He noted that most countries wanted to wait for a discussion in the UNSC on Iran sanctions. He added that if the UNSC failed to adopt another resolution, it did not mean that the EU would not - the EU likely then would.

Chad/Kenya

¶5. (C) Marn stressed that Slovenia would try to keep debate on these two issues as short as possible. There would also be an expression of appreciation for France's assistance in the evacuation in Chad. In addition, Commissioner Michel would report on his visit to Nairobi. The GAERC would issue conclusions. On Kenya, the GAERC's conclusions would stress support to Kofi Annan and his proposal. On Chad, it would express concern about the situation, but include a positive statement about the deployment of the ESDP mission.

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

¶6. (C) Marn explained that the FMs would like to hear from the Commission about the state of play on EPAs and what they

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could expect in the next months. He agreed with U.S. concern about interim agreements not respecting regional institutional cohesion. He noted that the interim agreements could be counter-productive.

Burma

¶7. (C) Marn doubted that the GAERC would debate Burma. The British had wanted to at this GAERC, but Marn said the real debate would take place at the March GAERC, when the EU would have to decide about prolonging its current sanctions regime. At that time, it could decide about possible amendments. The GAERC would issue conclusions taking note of the Burmese government's announcement of elections in 2010. The conclusions would still call for cooperation with Gamberi et al., as well as for improvements in human rights.

Other Issues

¶8. (C) Marn said there would not be a political debate on European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), but a discussion that would serve as an introduction to a debate at the April GAERC. Then the FMs would hear reports on the implementation of actions plans. In addition, the French had requested that Commissioner Mandelson brief the FMs on negotiations with the WTO in Geneva.

General Affairs Agenda Items

¶9. (C) According to Marn, the GAERC would first discuss two general affairs items. The Commission will present the progress, or lack thereof, made on the fisheries zone issue with Croatia. Marn said that Slovenia hopes there is not a lot of debate and is not planning any conclusions, but that the Council would recall conclusions of previous GAERCs about the 2004 commitments made by Croatia. Marn noted that there would be a short debate on the agenda for the March European

Council, which would focus on three large items, including the Lisbon strategy and energy and climate change. (A very tired Marn just could not remember the third item, but he said it was important.)

COLEMAN